

Self-made Prompt: "Write an allegorical story that expresses your biggest fear, without blatantly mentioning what that fear is."

Endings - A Short Story by David Gadelkarim

Another day, stained in a dull gray shade, as I come to the end of another carbon copy of the same week; the week days duplicating the same routine over and over again. Wake up, drink coffee, go to work, come home, and engage in meaningless and mindless "entertainment" until the sun goes down, cueing the end of my day. If this was a story, this would certainly be an abhorrent monotonous literary work with no sort of progression or depth. Just the same chapter on an infinite loop. Yet, even when it comes to my breaks from the dominant cycle, another one simply begins. I cannot even bring myself to break out of this time loop, with my weekends looking like exact mirrors of my weekdays, despite what I believe is supposed to be a break. It's not often that I go into such deep thought like this, but I guess I can't help being a little self aware, when life is not offering me much else to think about. In order to throw myself off this train of self deprecating and self loathing, I decide to walk outside my house of my own volition for what feels like the first time ever. A step outside my door has become synonymous with a realization that my average and uninteresting work life was still ongoing. Today was different though, from today, I will be sure to change things for myself. A cycle is created to be broken!

I decide not to drag my legs across the coarse ground for longer than I deem necessary, thus leading me to the closest park from my house. This park was characterized by the excited yet slightly grating sounds of the little creatures that occupy it, screaming for their parent's attention as they do something completely mundane, and finding fulfillment and excitement in everything around them. Oh how I'd kill to go back to that story, one filled with wonder and never-ending adventure, as opposed to the damp heap of words that compose the novel where I'm the protagonist. What a cliché, isn't it? I scout the area of the park that's the least likely to burst my eardrums, and take a seat. It seems that no one really uses this area, as it is quite a ways away from the slides and other child magnets that draw those miniature balls of chaos. I stare at the bright sun, slightly dimmed by the clouds in front of it, who try to take center stage. It's a soothing sight, causing my mind to quickly drift away.

The unstable bench starts creaking, bringing my consciousness back down to earth. My eyes open to witness that the behemoth that caused this rumbling, is actually just a child. A sulking child wearing a dull white shirt, who lets out a sigh grander than my self-loathing. His existence is almost unnoticeable, as the pages of his story look to have some ragged edges and seem to be nearing the end of quite an important chapter. The aura that surrounds him is a lot

more subtle and weak than what I would expect from a child his age. It seems that this kid has experienced the crushing fist of reality, that thought leads me to engaging with this anomaly.

“Hello! Is everything okay?” I proclaim with forced enthusiasm.

“Not really, old man.” His sunken face barely muttered those few words.

“Perhaps I can help you! How about telling me about what troubles you?” My false excitement contrasts his more genuine and sorrowful tone.

“It’s just... it’s hard and difficult and I kind of feel sad, old man.” The vague words barely drop out of his mouth and splat onto the floor. His pessimism, vague nihilism, and his repeated use of ‘old man’ make me want to punt him to the next county. However, I decide not to get arrested today. Before I can continue artificially extending this meaningless conversation, the boy who I later learned was named Billy finally reached home base.

“My favorite cartoon is having its last episode tomorrow and I’m sad that I will never watch it again.” I couldn’t help but feel a bit insulted by the trivial matter that broke this kid’s being, but perhaps it’s short sighted to simply write off his problems. I decide that the best course of action is a conveniently timed monologue. After all, despite the wearisome story that I’ve been placed in, I’m still the protagonist, and I should play my role.

“I’m sorry to hear that! As an old man, I have seen many stories start and end, and have lived through many stories myself. An ending is never something to fear, and nor is it something that should make you sad. Nothing is worse than a story that goes on too long for its own good, and some day, all stories must come to an end. However, when one story ends, another one always begins. Once you embark on that journey, that too will end one day, but you should always keep writing and living those stories through their low points and high points.” I stop talking for a moment, as I realize my arrow turned around from its intended target and pierced me instead. Perhaps I really am an awful protagonist, turning the helping of a child into a selfish endeavor. I’m about to continue talking, but it seems like the kid became uninterested and hopped off the bench. He stretches his leg, and directs his last words towards me.

“I didn’t understand what you said, but I think I understood! Thank you, old man. By the way, my name is Billy!” I think about how bland and unoriginal the author of my story is to have such a generic name for this token little kid character, but I think this convenient encounter by the hands of a higher power has cleared my head. The life I’m currently living won’t be eternal; this story will eventually have an ending. Perhaps I should appreciate the more simple and stable life I’m living now. There is a lot to love about this monotonous cycle, after all. I get to see

people I enjoy being around everyday at the office, I have a stable pay, I have one mean coffee maker at home, and I'm still breathing. It isn't the grandest story by any means, but it's my story, and that's all that matters. I reach my humble home, and rest until I loop around to the beginning of this cycle.

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